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[A Note from Ann:](#)

Happy New Year everyone! I hope this year will be better than last, and that wouldn't take much to do!

I'd like to talk a bit about Appraisals. An appraisal is a third party (appraiser) inspecting the property, pulling properties that are similar in age and size within the shortest distance possible (1 mile preferred, sometimes they have to go out 10 miles) that have sold within the past year. They take the price these homes sold for and make adjustments to them so they "match" yours (add or subtract for sq feet, acreage, age, condition, etc.). This is how they come up with the "value" for your home. Realtors do a similar comparison with our CMA

(Comparative Market Analysis) to come up with list price and before you make an offer to verify the prices are within range and that it will appraise. Only an Appraiser can give the value of a home.

You will need an appraisal if you are buying a home with a lender. The lender will order it and you will be required to pay for it, most of the time when it is done. It could range anywhere from \$400 to \$800. Your order for appraisal is put into a "pool" that contains a bunch of appraisers. They go in and pick out the appraisals they'd like to do. So, it's random and no lender has an appraiser "in their pocket". Basically the lender needs to know the value for the home is there before they lend on it. If it comes in low you will be required to renegotiate, come up with the additional money, or walk away. They can be contested, but these days it appears to be fruitless.

If you are paying cash an appraisal is not required but you can certainly get one if you'd like. Before listing or buying a property, make sure the agent provides you with a CMA. This lets you know where you're pricing your listing (compared to others) or if the listing is well priced if you're on the buyers side. If a CMA has some age to it, I would always do a new one as our market is changing all the time.

We are seeing a slight increase in listings, which has been a problem due to Coronavirus. This is encouraging. I am hopeful the market will return to normal very soon!

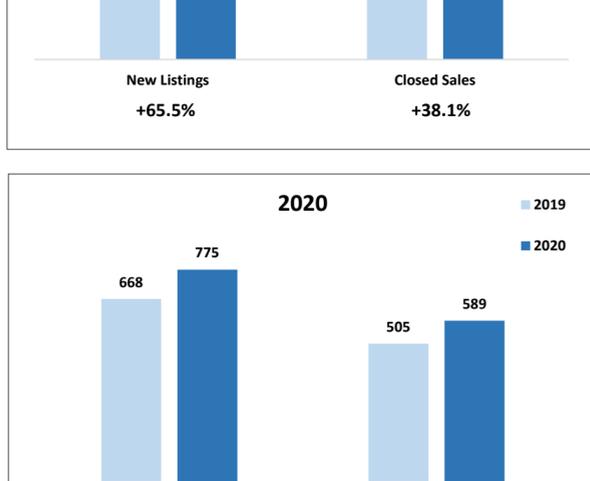
I hope this finds you all safe and well.

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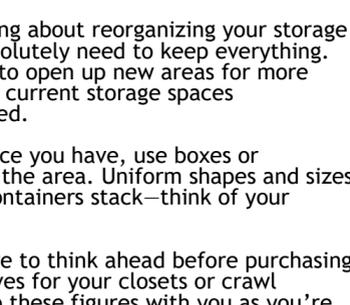
[Bastrop Area Monthly Statistics](#)

Below are the current statistics for the Bastrop Area. The average home sale price for December was \$312,322, which is up 35.4% from the previous year. The average home sale price for 2020, is \$275,947, which is up 13.7% from 2019.



[Creating Efficient Storage](#)

One of the biggest complaints from homeowners is that they don't have enough storage space. While adding extra physical rooms may not be an option for most, there are ways to creatively utilize your space.



Decluttering—Before you start thinking about reorganizing your storage space, first consider whether you absolutely need to keep everything. Decluttering may be the easiest way to open up new areas for more important items. Tackle each of your current storage spaces individually so you're not overwhelmed.

No stray items—To maximize the space you have, use boxes or containers to efficiently make use of the area. Uniform shapes and sizes will help you determine how these containers stack—think of your storage space like a game of Tetris.

Choose the right products—Make sure to think ahead before purchasing any storage containers, racks or shelves for your closets or crawl spaces. Measure your closet and keep these figures with you as you're shopping online or in stores.

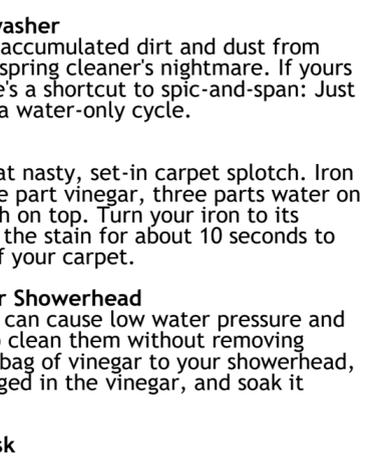
Storage zones—Use the space you have in smart ways by keeping all items you use regularly between your knees and shoulders. Use hard-to-reach areas for items that are for long-term storage. Think vertically instead of horizontally to make your storage spaces more efficient.

[9 No-Sweat Hacks to Deep Clean the Cruddiest Things](#)

By: [Jamie Wiebe](#)

Like using a drill on your tub (why didn't we think of it sooner!)

Ahhh! Sparkling floors, gleaming windows, and zero dust bunnies. A thorough cleaning can make your abode feel brand new. But that immaculate house comes with a price — sore biceps.



Instead of skimping on your annual deep clean because you're tasked, use these brilliant hacks for nine of the most pain-in-the-butt tasks. You'll get the same pristine results with half the time and energy.

#1 Break Out the Drill on Your Bathtub

Cleaning a grungy tub can be back-breaking work. But here's a genius idea that'll save you time and sweat: Use your drill. Simply attach a scrubby (or a foam ball polishing attachment if you happen to have one) and use it to do the scrubbing for you. Look in the automotive section for the attachment, which is made specially for tackling grime without scratching surfaces.

#2 Soak Stove Burners in Ammonia

Your stove burners take the bulk of the greasy, gunky mess during cooking, so do them a favor and give them a good cleaning. Don't worry: No scrubbing involved. To clear the crud, combine your stove burners and 1/4 cup ammonia in a plastic bag and let sit overnight. They should come clean with a light sponge the next day.

#3 Run AC Vents Through the Dishwasher

Scour as you might, removing all the accumulated dirt and dust from your floor and ceiling vents can be a spring cleaner's nightmare. If yours are made of aluminum or steel, there's a shortcut to spic-and-span: Just run them through the dishwasher on a water-only cycle.

#4 Iron Out Bad Carpet Stains

Don't spend an hour scrubbing out that nasty, set-in carpet splotch. Iron it out instead. Spritz a solution of one part vinegar, three parts water on the stain, and lay a clean cotton cloth on top. Turn your iron to its highest steam setting and run it over the stain for about 10 seconds to transfer the stain to the cloth and off your carpet.

#5 Tie a Bag of Vinegar Around Your Showerhead

Mineral build-up in your showerhead can cause low water pressure and wonky water streams. But it's easy to clean them without removing them. Using a rubber band, attach a bag of vinegar to your showerhead, making sure all the holes are submerged in the vinegar, and soak it overnight. Voilà. Good as new.

#6 Make Your Leaf Blower Multi-Task

Forget the broom and rags when you're cleaning out the garage. Whip out your leaf blower and let it blow all the dust, debris, and dead bugs (yuck!) away from the floor and shelving. Just be sure to put away lightweight things could accidentally get blown out with the trash.

#7 Get Rid of Crayon Marks with Goo Gone

Removing evidence of your toddler's overactive imagination from your gorgeous white walls can be a struggle, but a little bit of Goo Gone (traditionally used to clean sticker residue) will remove the crayon and your headache. Spray it on the drawing, wait a moment, and wipe it off cleanly — without exhausting your arms.

#8 Boil Your Range Filter

There's no need to scrub the greasy and grime off your range filters. Use a bit of baking soda and your largest pot instead. Set the water to boil, slowly add 1/2 cup of baking soda, and submerge your filters for about five minutes. (Make sure to dump the water somewhere safe. Grease in the drain is even worse than grimy filters.)

#9 Sprinkle Your Mattress With Baking Soda

Your mattress needs a springtime refresh, too, but you sure can't toss it in the washing machine. Cleaning gurus recommend dragging your mattress outside, beating it, and letting the sunshine help freshen it, then dragging it back in. But who has the muscle for that? This is much easier: Use a kitchen strainer to sprinkle baking soda over its surface and let sit for an hour or longer. Longer is better. Then use your vacuum's upholstery attachment to suck up the odor-absorbing soda.

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